# Addressing Students' Identified Mental Health Needs During the 2020-2021 School Year

Bringing Into Focus Summer Webinar Series

September 15, 2020

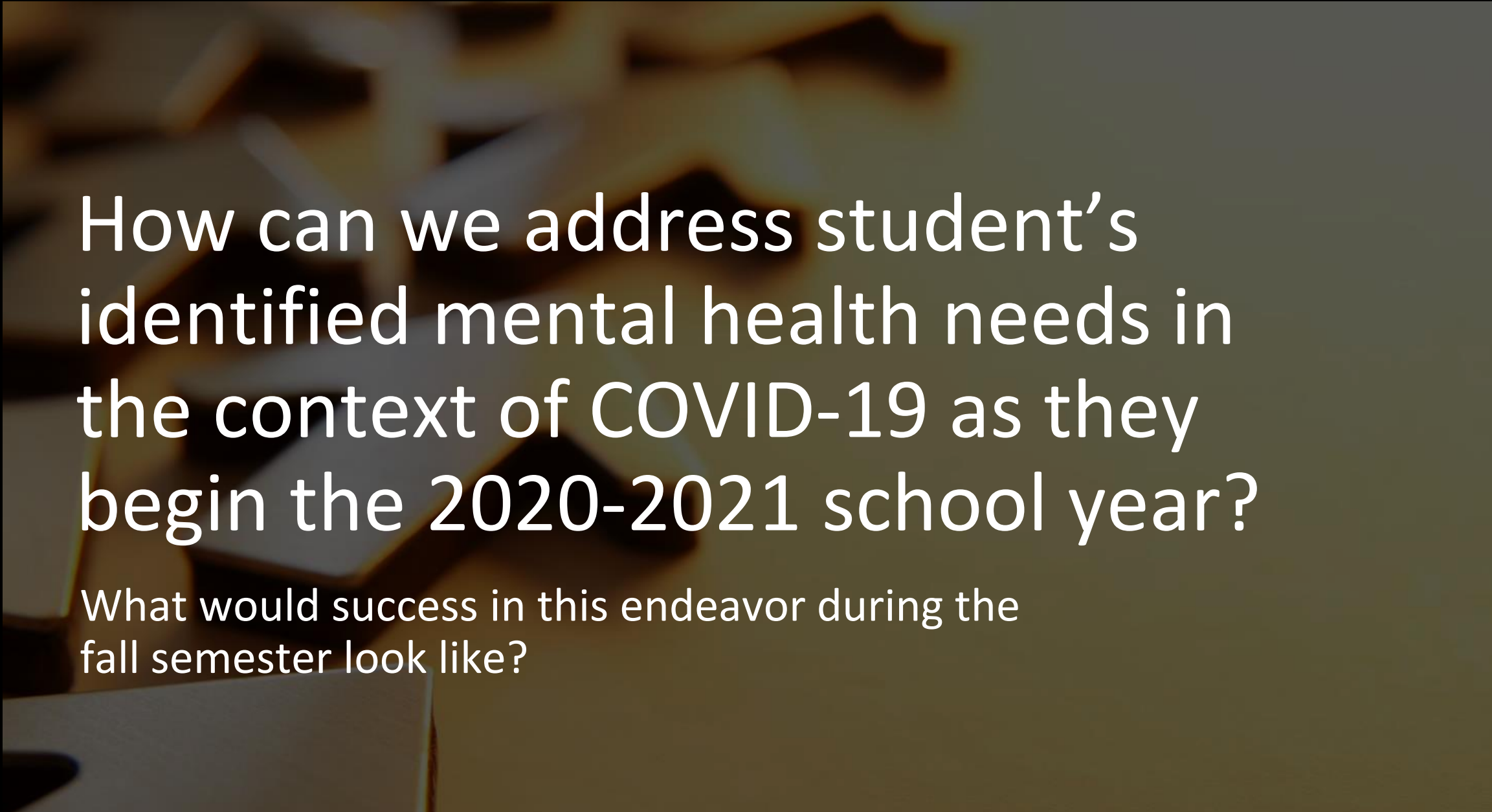**National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments**

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# Presenters

**Sandy Williamson,** Director
*National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments* (NCSSLE)

**Sharon Hoover and Nancy Lever**, Co-Directors
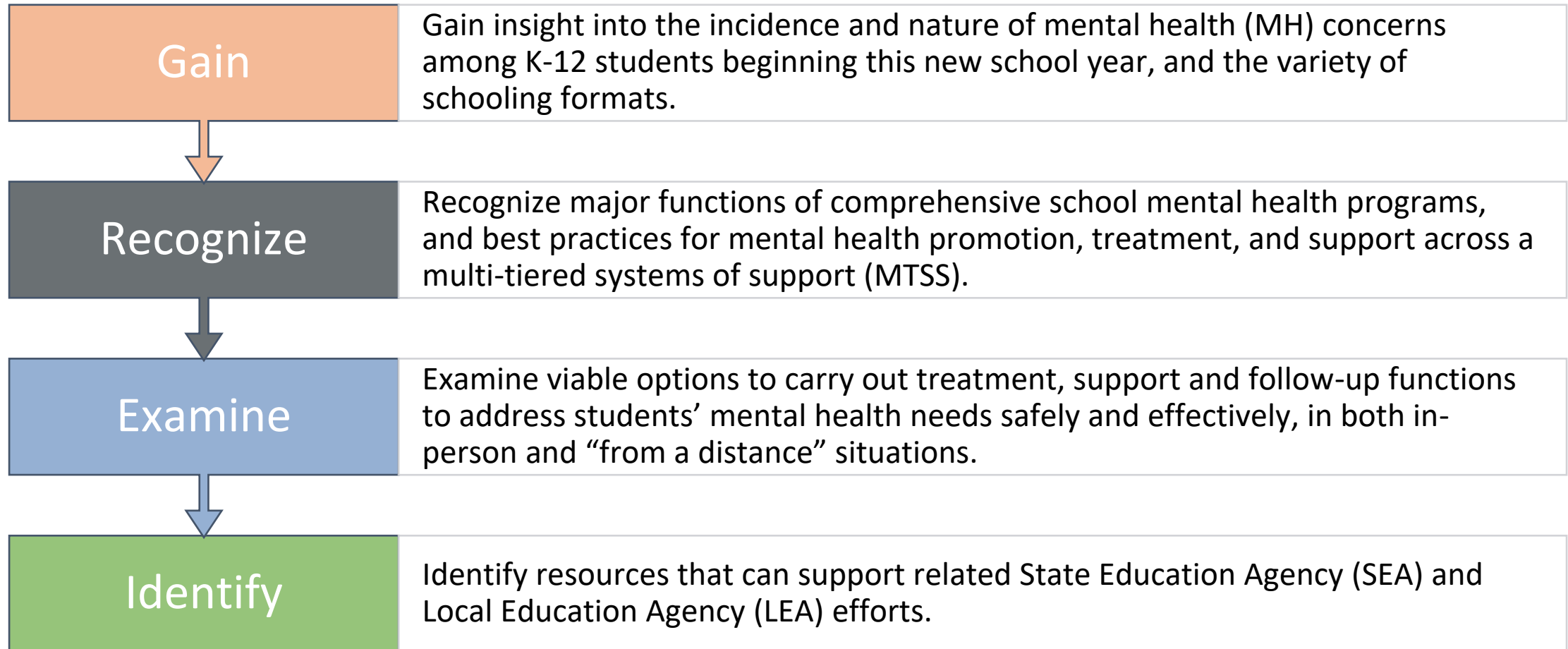*National Center for School Mental Health*

# How can we address student's identified mental health needs in the context of COVID-19 as they begin the 2020-2021 school year?

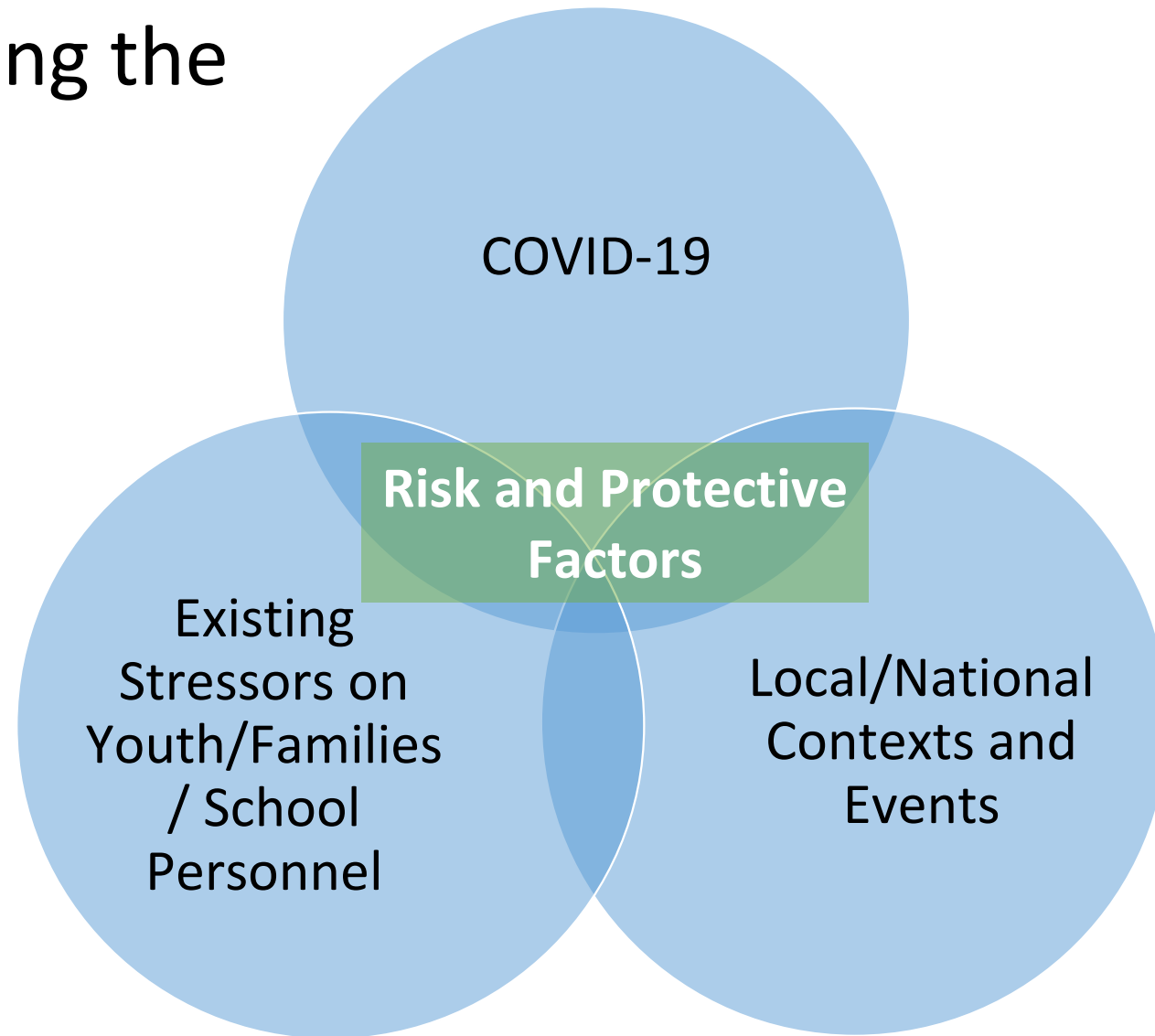What would success in this endeavor during the fall semester look like?

# Objectives

**Gain** — Gain insight into the incidence and nature of mental health (MH) concerns among K-12 students beginning this new school year, and the variety of schooling formats.

**Recognize** — Recognize major functions of comprehensive school mental health programs, and best practices for mental health promotion, treatment, and support across a multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS).

**Examine** — Examine viable options to carry out treatment, support and follow-up functions to address students' mental health needs safely and effectively, in both in-person and "from a distance" situations.

**Identify** — Identify resources that can support related State Education Agency (SEA) and Local Education Agency (LEA) efforts.

# Agenda

**1** Range of K-12 learning contexts beginning 2020-21 school year

**2** Nature and scope of students' MH needs
as they begin the 2020-21 school year

**3** Adaptations and options for MH promotion, indicated treatment,
support, and follow-along care for K-12 students

**4** Reflections

**5** Resources

**6** Closing and next steps

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# Understanding the Context



COVID-19

Risk and Protective Factors

Existing Stressors on Youth/Families / School Personnel

Local/National Contexts and Events

# Stressors Related To COVID-19

- Increased challenges with mental health issues *(e.g. anxiety, depression)*
- Worry and fear for the safety of self and others *(for teachers, worry about their students)*

- Unsafe situations at home *(e.g., abuse, neglect, domestic violence)*
- Loss of family members, community members, teachers, and students
- Disproportionate effects of COVID-19 in communities of color and increased risk for these and other stressors
- Learning new technology, adapting to different ways of teaching and learning, maintaining student engagement, balancing work and home life, with multiple stressors

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# National Trends: Students' Mental Health Status

- ***JAMA Pediatrics* (April 2020):** The COVID-19 pandemic may worsen existing mental health problems and lead to more cases among children and adolescents because of the unique combination of the public health crisis, social isolation, and economic recession.

- ***Child & Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health (May 2020)*:** During the recent COVID-19 outbreak in China, 54% of the participants of a large online study rated the impact of the outbreak on their mental health as moderate to severe, with depressive symptoms and anxiety being the conditions most often stated. The current crises imposes multifaceted burdens on children.

- ***Education Week* National Survey**: **76%** percent of students and **66%** percent of teachers are in lower spirits than they were before the crisis.

- **GALLUP (June 2020):** "The potential for heightened mental health challenges confronting schools in the fall is evident. **29%** percent of over 1,200 parents with school-aged children said their child is "already experiencing harm" to their emotional or mental health, and another **14%** indicated their children were approaching their limits."

# Key Components of Comprehensive School Mental Health Support

✅ **Awareness/ Surveillance**

🟠 **Crisis Support and Early Intervention**
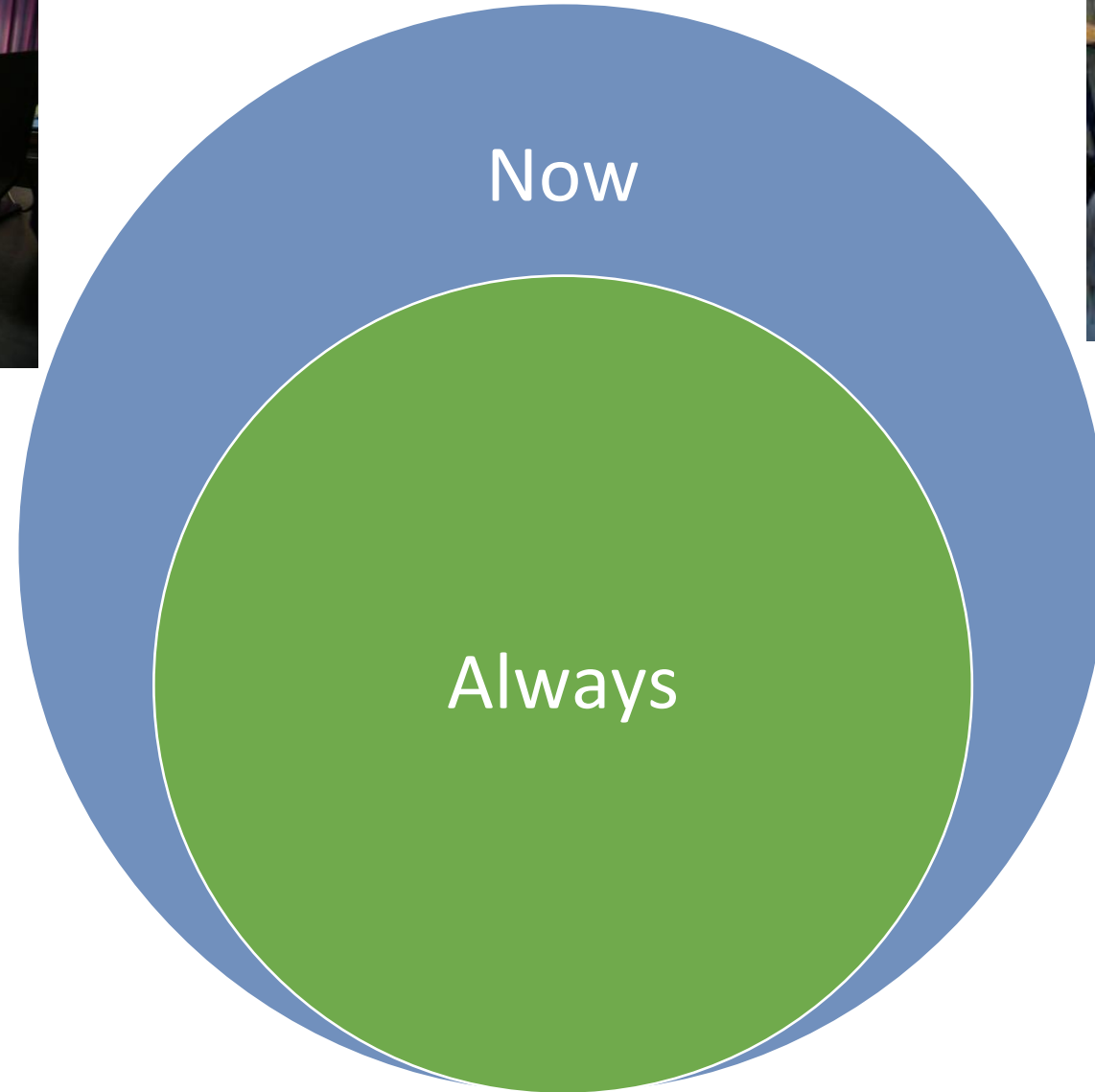
🔵 **Screening/Early Detection**

🔵 **Intervention/Treatment**

✅ **Support** *(including family, peer)*
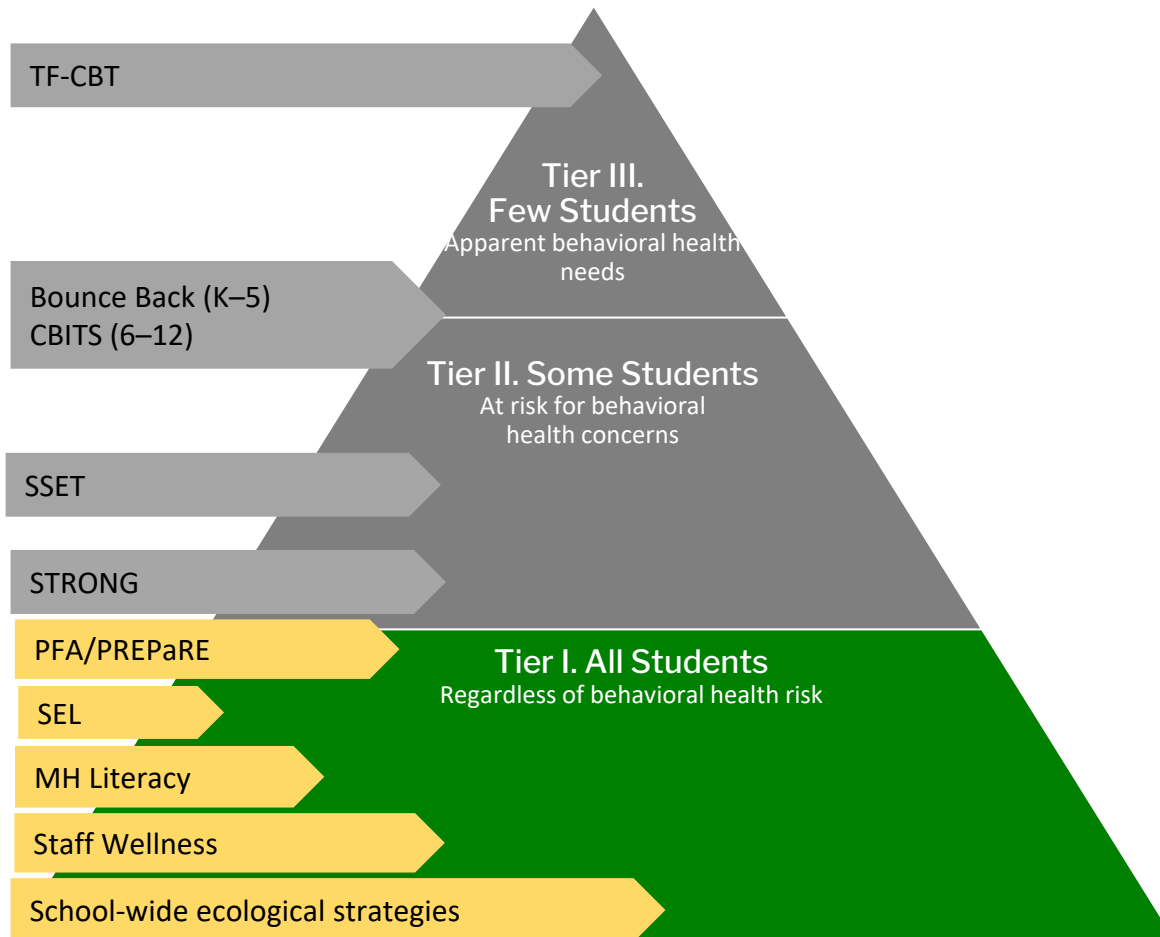
🟠 **Follow-up/Aftercare**

Now

Always

# Key School MH Function:
# Mental Health Promotion for All Students

*Polling Question: How is your SEA supporting mental health promotion?*

❑ Positive School Climate

❑ Staff Wellness

❑ Social Emotional Learning

❑ Trauma Responsive School

❑ Mental Health Literacy

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# Universal Strategies

TF-CBT

Tier III.
Few Students
Apparent behavioral health needs

Bounce Back (K–5)
CBITS (6–12)

Tier II. Some Students
At risk for behavioral health concerns

SSET

STRONG

PFA/PREPaRE

Tier I. All Students
Regardless of behavioral health risk

SEL

MH Literacy

Staff Wellness

School-wide ecological strategies

- Promote supportive, **positive school climate**
- **Staff wellness**
- **Social Emotional Learning** (SEL)
- **Crisis preparedness**
- **Trauma-responsive** school policies and practices
- **Mental health literacy** for school staff and students

# Universal Strategies (continued)



- "Encourage reassurance, routines, regulation"
  - Part of everyday distance classroom experience

- Translation of existing Tier 1 strategies
  - SEL in virtual classes/home

- Daily-weekly check-ins

# Trauma-Sensitive Schools Training Package



Trauma-Sensitive Schools
TRAINING PACKAGE

UNDERSTAND • BUILD • LEAD

- **Educate** all school staff about trauma and its effects.
- **Promote** safety in relationships and in the environment.
- **Reduce** trauma-related triggers and eliminate re-traumatizing practices.
- **Consider** trauma in all assessment protocols and behavior development plans.
- **Ensure** youth and family voice, choice, and empowerment.
- **Address** the secondary effects on educators that can occur when working with trauma survivors.
- **Build** student and staff social and emotional skills to foster resilience.

https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/trauma-sensitive-schools-training-package

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# Trauma-Sensitive Schools Training Package

**UNDERSTAND Trauma and Its Impact**

- E-resource
- Companion slide presentation and activity packet

**BUILD Trauma-Sensitive Schools**

- Online module for all staff
- Handouts
- Facilitation Guide

**LEAD Trauma-Sensitive Schools**

- Online module for leaders
- Action Guide
- Facilitation Guide

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# Trauma-Sensitive Schools Training Package



- Foundational information about prevalence and impact of trauma, and what this means for schools.

- View individually on computer or tablet.

- Companion slide deck.

# Trauma-Sensitive Schools Training Package

# Trauma-Sensitive Schools Training Package



Trauma-Sensitive Schools
TRAINING PACKAGE
UNDERSTAND • BUILD • LEAD

Understanding Trauma and Its Impact
Activity Packet

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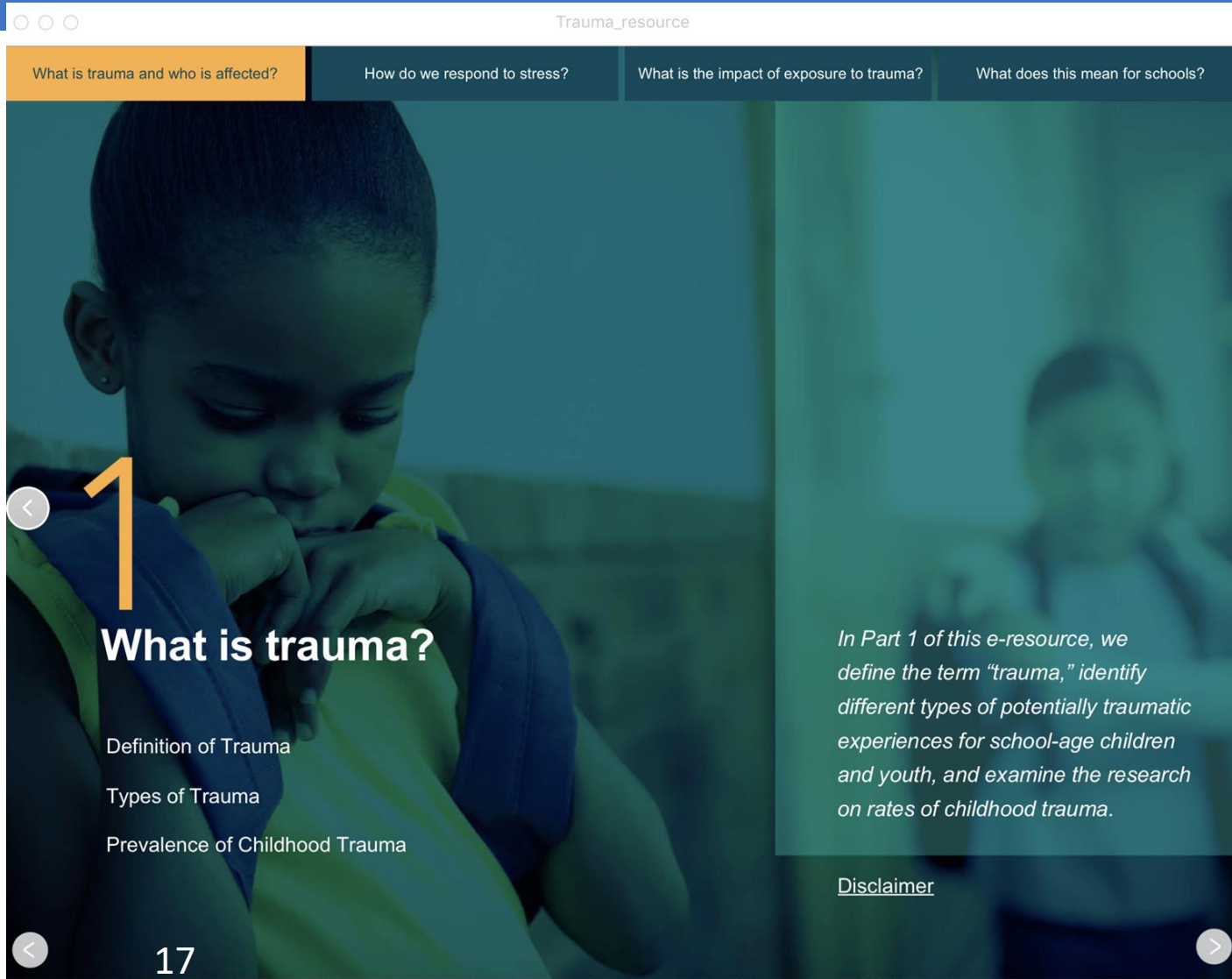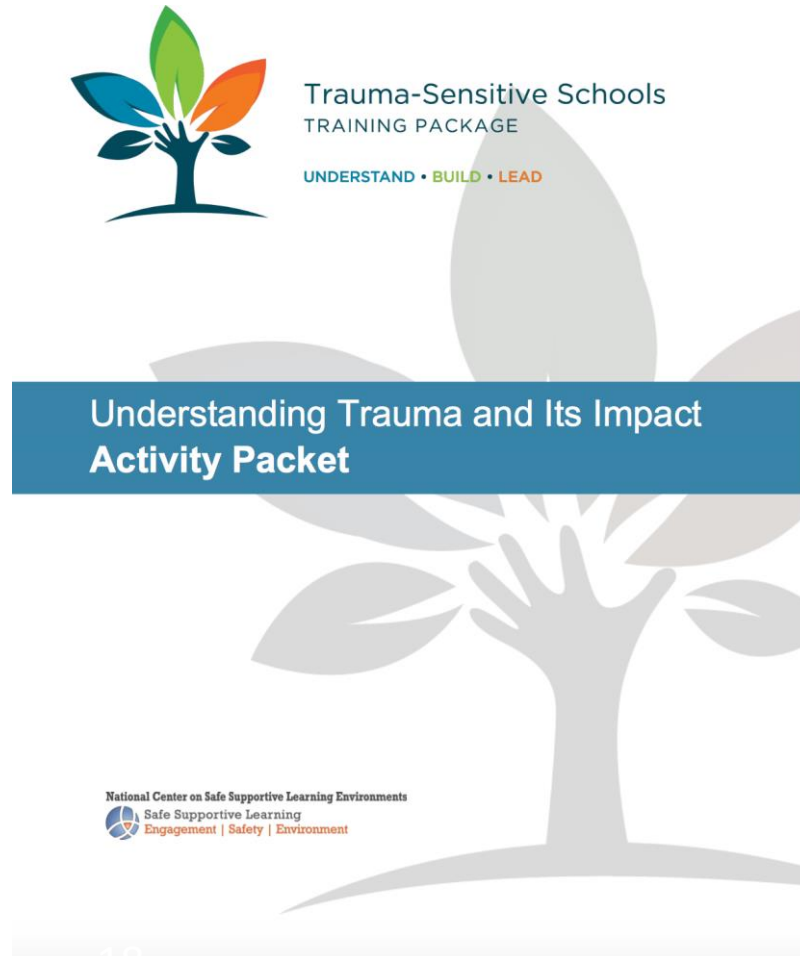
- Includes discussion questions, activities for each section of the e-resource/slide presentation to reinforce concepts.

- Contains pre- and post-knowledge surveys.

# Trauma-Sensitive Schools Training Package
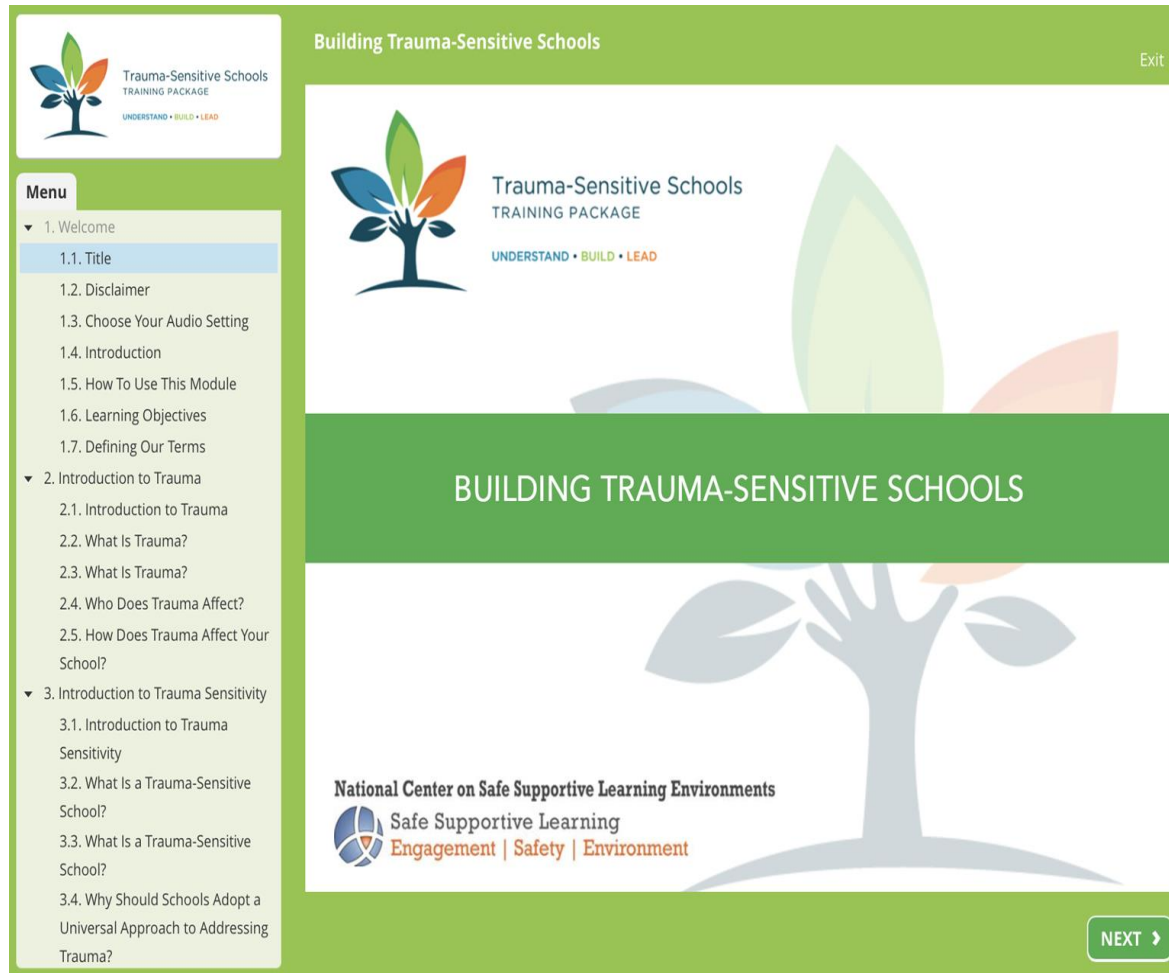


- Introduces all staff to the concept of trauma-sensitive schools.

- Offers a framework and practices for both classroom and schoolwide use.

- Contains downloadable handouts to support staff learning.

- Recommended for use as part of group in-person training.

# Mental Health Early Intervention and Treatment

*Polling Question: How is your SEA supporting MH interventions and treatment?*

- ❑ Counseling office hours
- ❑ Group interventions
- ❑ Individual treatment
- ❑ Family therapy
- ❑ Referral to community MH
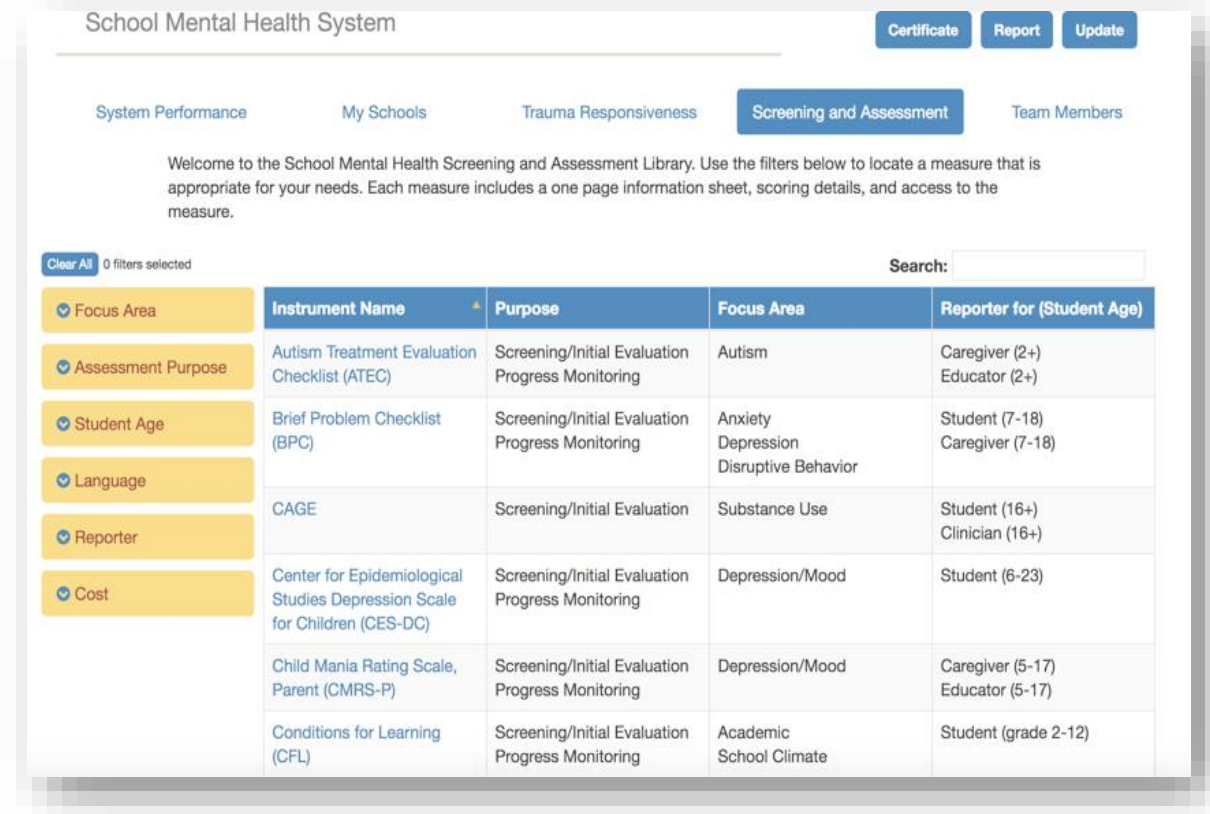
# Screening and Treatment Have Been Limited

- Benefits of prevention and early intervention for **physical health** well-recognized.

- Routine child **mental health** screening and checkups have lagged.

- < 25 years old – greatest delay to initial treatment after initial symptom onset.



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# Possible Constructs to Include in Screening

- Impact of COVID-19
  - COVID-19 Adolescent Symptom & Psychological Experience Questionnaire (CASPE)
  - Epidemic Pandemic Impacts Inventory (EPII)
  - DERS for Coronavirus Pandemic
  - Coronavirus Impact Scale

- Life Satisfaction/Subjective Well-being

- Psychological Distress/ Symptomatology

- Positive Functioning

- School Factors

- Social Determinants of Health



Source: National Center for School Mental Health, https://schoolmentalhealth.org

# Screening Questions to Ask Students and Families

### Since COVID-19 and School Closures…

- What has been the most difficult for your family?
- What positive opportunities, if any, have arisen for your family?
- Have any of your family, friends, or people you know become ill or died from COVID-19?
- Have you had any job or financial loss?
- Have you had any trouble with food or housing?

### How will your child be returning to school (in-person, hybrid, distance)?

- How did distance learning go for you/your child in the spring? Did you learn anything that could be helpful now?
- How do you/your child feel about this year's school plan? Do you have any specific concerns? Anything you are looking forward to?

Source: National Center for School Mental Health, https://schoolmentalhealth.org

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Is this a normal reaction to COVID-19? Or is it more?



Signs of Sadness Turning into Depression

Persistent anxiety
Insomnia
Dark thoughts
Persistent chronic p

Irritability
Fatigue
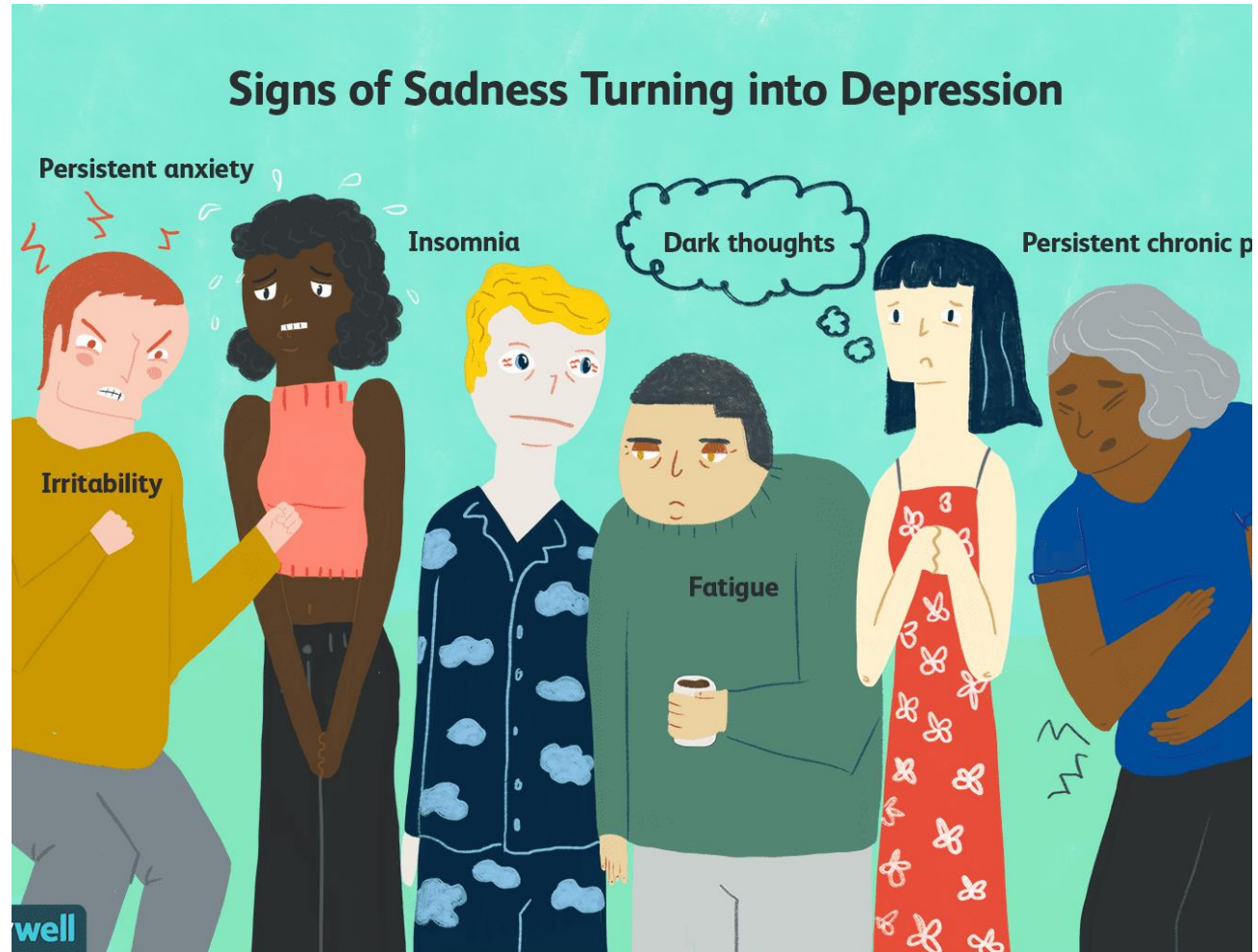
# Warning Signs For Depression

Social withdrawal; isolation

High emotional reactivity /anger to limits /expectations

Increase self criticism and overaction to criticism

Drop-in activities, loss of interest

Talking about death, interest in death, wanting to be dead

Increased tendency to shut down

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# How To Ask About Mood

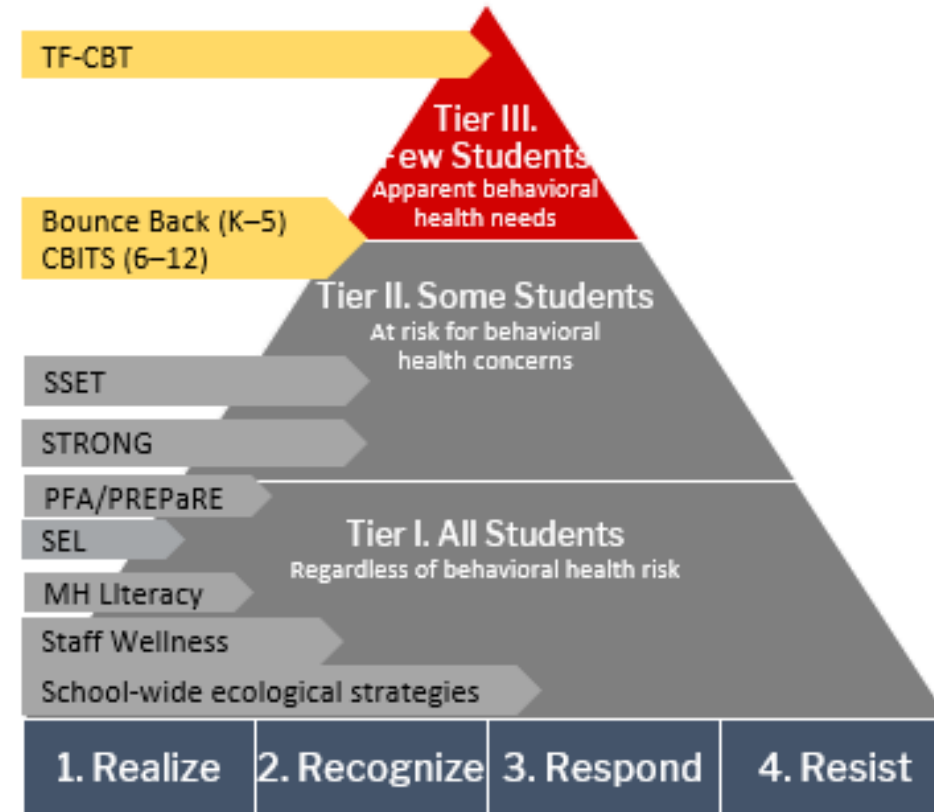| | |
|---|---|
| **Chose the right time.** | Do not engage immediately after an argument/disagreement or when in the middle of a fun task. |
| **Stick to the facts.** | Tell them specific behaviors you find concerning, ask if they have noticed behaviors. |
| **Validate.** | Let them know how hard things have been lately, express concern for their well-being. |
| **Self-disclose.** | Sharing can be a powerful tool. |
| **Be ready for push back.** | Conversation may go poorly or not. |

# Early Intervention and Treatment in Schools

- Evidence-based psychosocial interventions – e.g., CBITS/Bounce Back, TF-CBT

- Psychiatric care



Source: Sharon Hoover, National Center for School Mental Health (2018)

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# Why Mental Health Treatment in Schools?

Youth are 6 times more likely to complete mental health treatment in schools than in community settings.

**Treatment Initiation and Completion**

N=118 youth randomly assigned to clinic-based or school-based trauma treatment after Hurricane Katrina (Jaycox et al., 2010)



Clinic-Based: Enrolled 58, Started care 14, Finished care 9
School-Based: Enrolled 60, Started care 57, Finished care 53

Citation: Jaycox et al, 2010
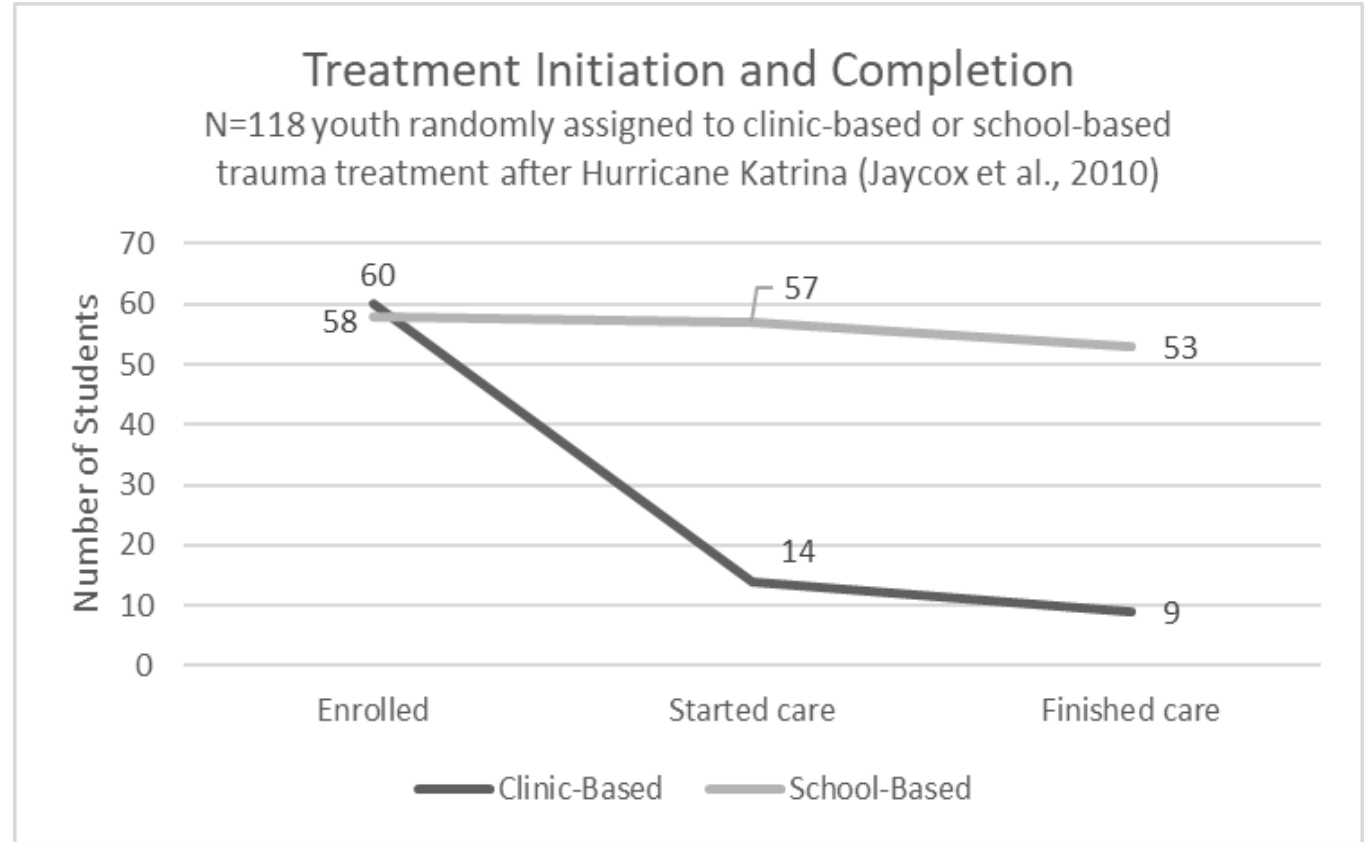
CBITS was developed to help children in schools cope with trauma.
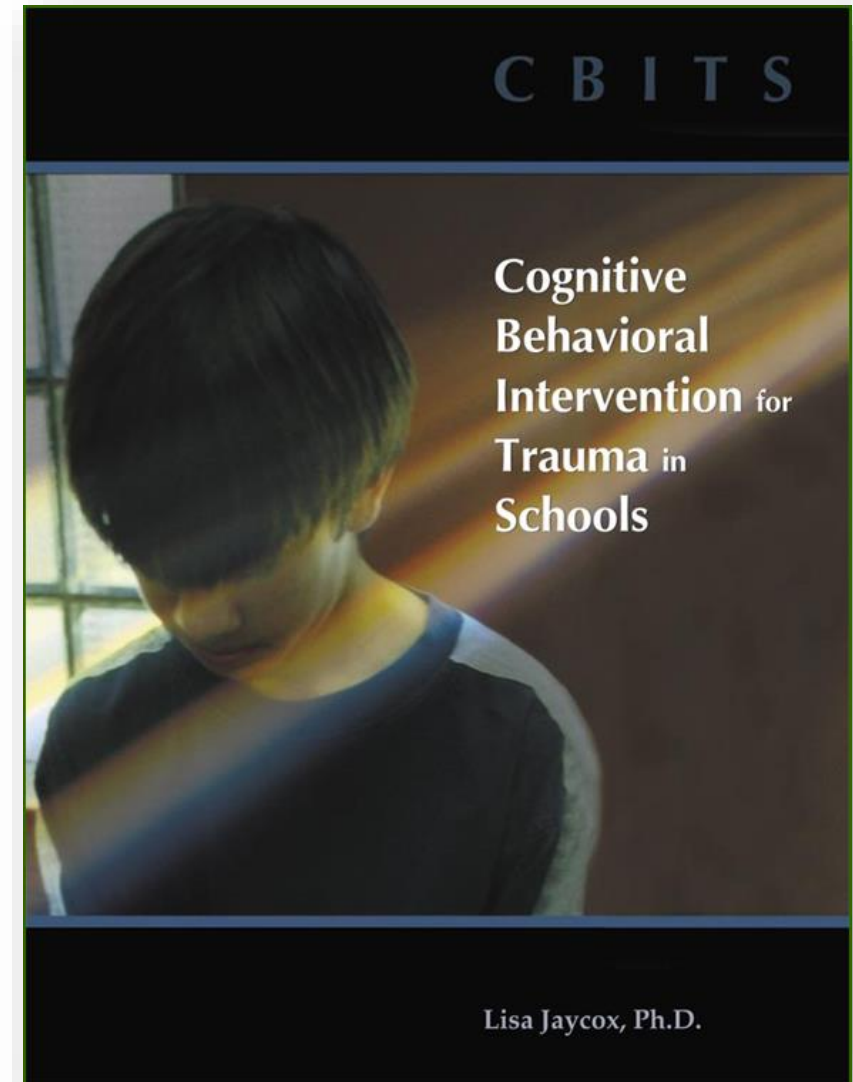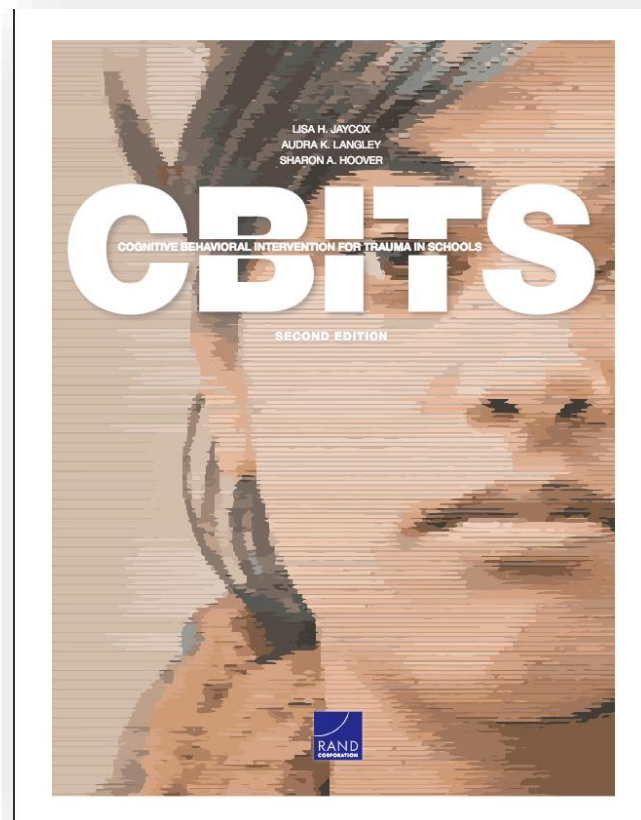
# CBITS Online Live

**Session 1:** Introduction, Orientation, and Rationale

**Session 2:** Psychoeducation and Relaxation

**Session 3:** Thoughts and Feelings

**Session 4:** H.O.T. Seat

**Session 5:** Social Problem-Solving

**Session 6:** Moving-Up Ceremony

https://cbitsprogram.org/_static/cbits/uploads/files/ /revised_virtual_delivery_guidance_2.0.pdf

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# Expand Telehealth

COVID-19: Dramatic increase in telehealth to support child mental health via:

- Federal, state and local infrastructure support,
- Policy adjustments to ease use, and
- Technical assistance and training to providers and consumers.

# Robust Telehealth Capacity Requirements

- **Continued infrastructure improvements** (e.g., enhanced broadband systems, up-to-date telehealth delivery equipment, internet connectivity services for providers and services)

- **Policy expansion** (e.g., reimbursement parity for telehealth, expanded access of Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance telehealth programs)

- **Ongoing guidance and support** to providers and families to increase adoption and facility of telehealth services

# Service Delivery Challenges

- Consent, privacy and confidentiality
- Crisis protocols
- Technology and Wi-Fi access
- Provider knowledge, comfort, and sense of self-efficacy with use of telemental health
- Barriers to collaboration within the school building
- Disrupted relationships with students and colleagues
- Locating disconnected or hard to reach students and families
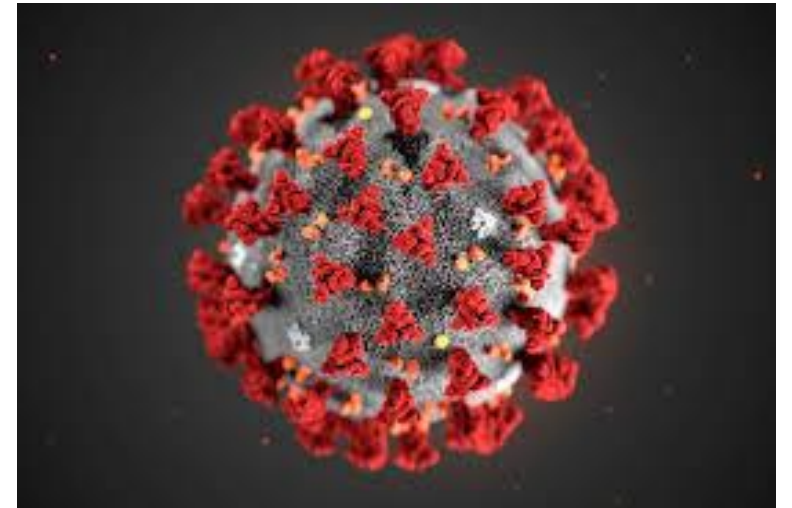


Source: Ann and Robert Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago (2020), Center for Childhood Resilience

# Opportunities for Providers

- Reduce stigma related to MH and wellness, economic challenges, and trauma exposure.

- Challenge inequity.

- Listen to community and youth voices.

- Provide consultation to staff.

- Provide consultation to parents.

- Engage in interdisciplinary, cross-school, and cross-agency collaboration.

- Provide peer support, consultation, and supervision.

- Provide opportunities for professional growth.

Source: Ann and Robert Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago (2020), Center for Childhood Resilience

# Opportunities for Students and Families

- Technology can increase engagement, novelty, and "fun".
- Reinforce and generalize skills outside of face-to-face interaction (using apps, reminders).
- Reduce barriers to caregiver involvement in school-based services for some families.





Source: Ann and Robert Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago (2020), Center for Childhood Resilience

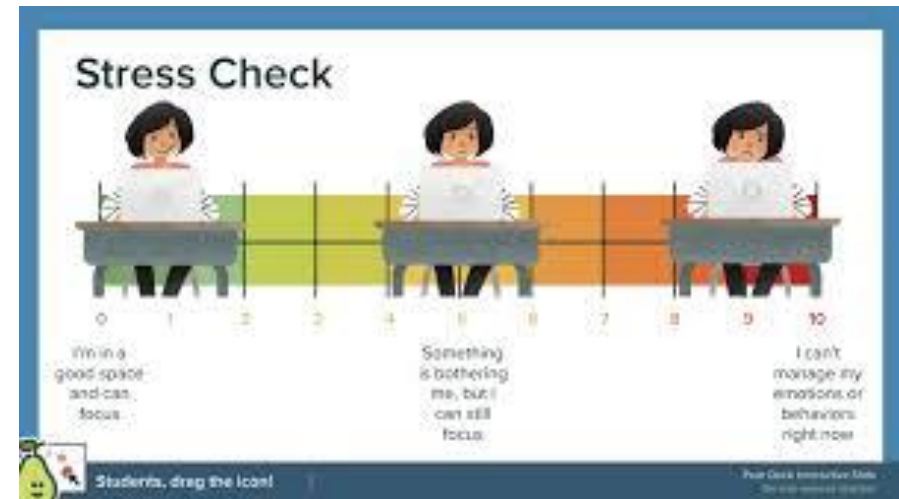National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments
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# Tier 2 and Tier 3 Innovations

- Technological innovations for groups or individuals:
  - Bitmoji Classroom
  - Peardeck for Google Slides
  - Sharing videos or read-alouds
  - Closegap emotional check-ins
  - Online games like Uno, Checkers, Chess
  - Jointly created artwork or documents
  - Virtual Calming Room



- Strategies for conducting CBT virtually: behavioral activation and anxiety exposure tasks that can be utilized during social distancing.

- Tier II and Tier III information for caregivers to reinforce at home.

- Information sharing with school and caregivers (newsletters, shared virtual spaces, using community spaces like grocery stores and food pantries).

Source: Ann and Robert Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago (2020), Center for Childhood Resilience

# Tier 2 and Tier 3 Telehealth Strategies

**Maintain routines from in-person therapy.**

**Consider how to best adapt structure.**

**Use interactive Web-platform features.**

**Ensure confidentiality and adapt consent.**

# Telehealth 101 Webinar

**Telemental Health 101**

This 47 minute training, conducted by Jennifer Cox, LCSW-C, Director of the University of Maryland School Mental Health Program, provides an overview to help prepare school mental health clinicians to use telemental health to provide services and supports to students and families.

# Introducing Telemental Health

- Explain what teletherapy is and how it works.
- Describe benefits of teletherapy:
  - Access to services
  - Students report being as satisfied or more satisfied with teletherapy compared to in-person therapy
- Be confident with no anxiety when explaining teletherapy.
- Ask if a teletherapy strategy would be agreeable to consenting student or parent/guardian.



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# Informed Consent and Confidentiality

- Discuss confidentiality, limits, and how maintained.

- Discuss potential risks, benefits, and limitations of teletherapy.

- Cover the student's/caregiver's rights to refuse or withdraw.

- Determine 1-2 emergency contacts and create a plan.

- Consider alternatives if there are technology issues.

- Obtain and document assent and consent.

- Have a signal if there is not privacy.

- Offer chat functions, when needed, for added privacy.

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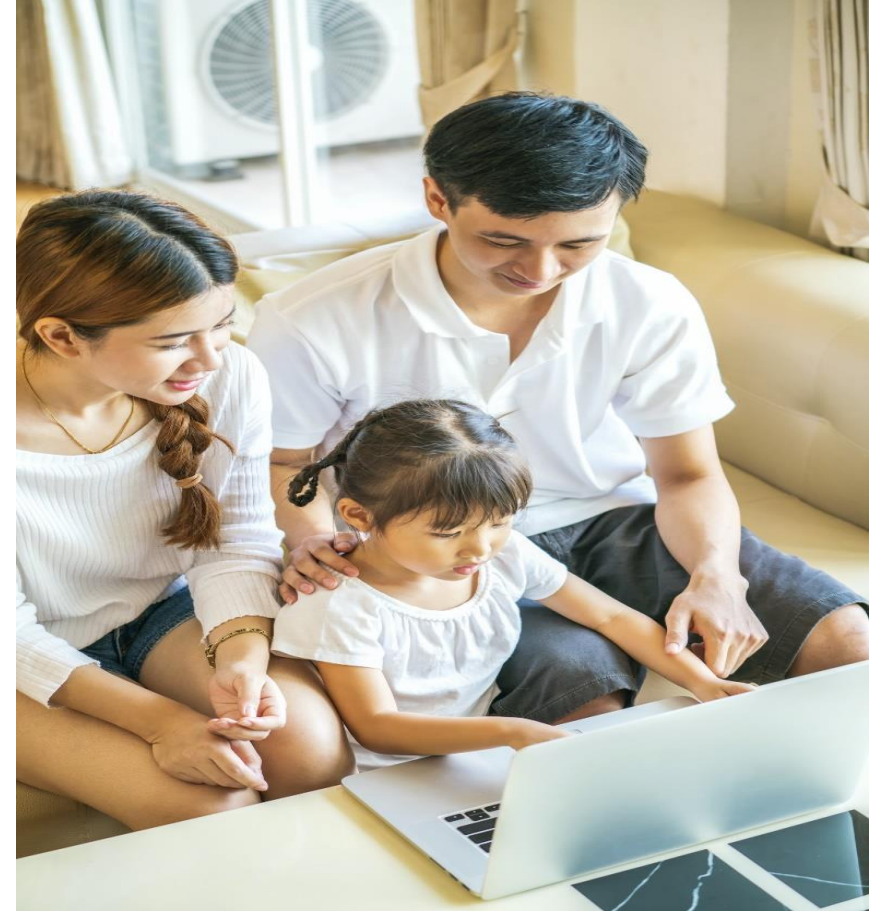Engagement | Safety | Environment

# Staging Matters



- Background objects and colors
- Frame participants
- Participant arrangement
- Apparent eye contact
- Lighting
- Sound
- Eliminate distractions
- Plug into network whenever possible

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# Self-Monitor, Use Nonverbal Gestures More Intentionally and More Often



**Rapport**, particularly the therapist's "affective availability," may require greater animation than during in-person care.

## Be 110% of yourself

✔ **Do virtual high fives.**

✔ **Give a tour of your "office."**

✔ **Share artwork.**

✔ **Check frequently for understanding.**

# Create Crisis Response Plans



- Be aware of subgroups of students who may be at higher risk for additional adversity during this time, such as LGBTQ students, Asian students, and students at higher risk of suicide.

- For students at risk of suicide, provide the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and develop action plans.

- Know signs of child abuse/neglect, especially in a telehealth setting.

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# Teaming Adaptations

What are the new roles and responsibilities in our new normal?

What new systems need to be created for sharing data with and across teams?

How will the referral process work in a virtual or hybrid environment?

How can students best be triaged when not in person?

How can communication best occur between school and community partners?

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# Family Support

- Parents report significantly higher levels of stress related to COVID than non-parents.

- Over 70% of parents report distance learning for children is a source of stress.

- Additional significant sources of stress for parents include basic needs, health care services and missing major milestones.

- People of color are also significantly more likely to experience stress related to COVID.

Source: APA (2020)

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# Protective Familial Factors for Youth Mental Health

- Supportive family relationships

- Clear expectations for behaviors and values

- Household structure, predictability, limit-setting, monitoring

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# Engaging Families as Partners in Protecting Students' Mental Health

What are new ways to invite family organizations to share their voice in virtual settings?

What are best ways to engage youth and families and to stay connected?

What are ways to get opinion/perspectives from families if not in person?

What are meeting strategies that can be used to ensure youth and families have a voice?

Are youth and family partners reflective of the population you are serving?

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# Social Media and Online Support

***Online social media and communication associated with concern***

- Evidence does not support existing fears regarding social media use as driving MH problems.

***Missed opportunities for leveraging technology and online communication***

- Youth actively seeking support for mental wellbeing online.
- Few are connecting with digital MH apps and expertise.

***Youth online interactions offer key assets that promote wellbeing***

- Peers and access to social support offer important protective effects for wellbeing in youth.

Ito et al., 2020

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# Suggested Resources

Treatment Services and Adaptation Center for Resiliency, Hope & Wellness in Schools (2020). **Remote Delivery of Group-Based Trauma Interventions**

National Association of State Directors of Special Education (2020).  **Least Restrictive Environment in the Wake of COVID-19: A Brief.**

Ito, M., Odgers, C., Schueller, S., Cabrera, J., Conaway, E., Cross, R. &  Hernandez, M. (June 2020**). Social Media and Youth Wellbeing: What We Know and Where We Should Go**

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# Suggested Resources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (August 2020). **Preparing K-12 School Administrators for a Safe Return to School in Fall 2020**

National Institutes of Health Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences (May 2020). **COVID-19 OBSSR Research Tools**

CASEL (June 2020). **An Initial Guide to Leveraging the Power of Social Emotional Learning as You Prepare to Reopen and Renew Your School Community.**

UCLA Center for Mental Health in Schools (Summer 2020). **The Two Pandemics Call for Commitment to Embedding Mental Health Concerns in All Forms of Schooling**

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# Suggested Resources about Telemental Health

Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network (SAMHSA, 2020). **Making a Good Connection: Engaging Students and Families in School Tele-Mental Health**

Cox, J. (March 2020), **Telemental Health 101**, National Center for School Mental Health [47-minute video]

National Telehealth Policy Resource Center, Center for Connected Health Policy (2020):
- **COVID-19 Related State Actions**
- **Current Telehealth-Related State Laws and Reimbursement Policies**

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (March 2020). **General Provider Telehealth and Telemedicine Tool Kit**

Sonnier, S., Hesgrove, B., Rider, F. & Van Dyke, K. (September 2020). **Defining the Role of Telemental Health During & After the COVID-19 Pandemic**

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# Questions?

Please enter any questions you may have in the "Q&A" box, and our presenters will respond.

# Next Steps

**1** Participants will receive a copy of today's slides and accompanying set of resources (hyperlinks) by email.

**2** Please visit https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/responding-covid-19-pandemic for extensive collection of vetted information resources to support re-opening of K-12 schools for 2020-21.

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# Upcoming Webinar Opportunity Featuring Grantee

***Developing and Implementing High Quality Virtual Social, Emotional, and Mental Health Supports Webinar***

**Presenters**
- Brit'ny Stein, Ph.D., School Psychologist, Osage County Interlocal Collaborative Oklahoma
- Jacob Olsen, Ph.D., Advanced Studies in Education and Counseling, California State University Long Beach

**Date**
Wednesday, September 16, 2020 – 2:00 pm ET

**Registration Link**
https://neglected-delinquent.ed.gov/events/developing-and-implementing-high-quality-virtual-social-emotional-and-mental-health-supports

National Technical Assistance Center for the Education of Delinquent Children and Youth

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# Thank you for joining us today!

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BIF2

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